

Dear Senator/Representative :

I am writing in regards to Senate Bill 387, An Act Consolidating Various State Agencies.

As a friend of a blind client served by BESB (the Board of Education and Services for the Blind), I am very concerned about this matter, therefore, I **strongly object** to such a maneuver.

I have read that the BESB is the oldest agency serving blind people in the country, and is considered a model agency by many states. Overall consumer satisfaction with the agency is 84% (2009 survey). At approximately 50%, the unemployment rate for blind people of working age in CT is 25% better than the national average. At 95%, high school graduation rates for Connecticut's blind students are nearly 40% better than the national average. 70% of seniors, the fastest growing population of people suffering from vision loss (due to diabetes, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma), report increased independence and quality of life improvements after receiving services from BESB. Blind people in CT receive over 10,000 hours of assistance annually from BESB volunteers. These figures will change drastically for the worse if BESB is consolidated into bureaucracies which have never dealt with blind people. These successes are due to being an autonomous agency with a continuum of services.

My childhood friend lost his sight over five years ago, and with BESB's help he was able to rebuild his life and become a contributing member of society. Like him, as well as so many others, he has overcome many obstacles and he has the BESB to thank for that! I can't urge you strongly enough to kill this bill.

Sincerely,

Andrea Scarinzi